

narrow-minded and bigoted fanaticism flourished in the name of religious liberty, were problems long to me insoluble, but which early interested me. But what most attracted my musing, even as a boy, was the elements of our political parties, and the strange mystification by which that which was national in its constitution had become odious, and that which was exclusive was presented as popular.¹

We are not bound to suppose that the Disraeli of 1832 would have set forth his difficulties in the precise manner in which the Disraeli of 1870 set them forth in retrospect: the language of the foregoing extract is the language of his finished political creed, of the *Vindication* or of *Coningsby* but even in 1832 all the elements of his finished political creed can already be detected. His faith in democracy on the one hand, his reverence for tradition and our traditional institutions on the other; his dislike of the selfish. Whig oligarchy; his desire to secure a modification of the Corn Laws, but without the sacrifice of agriculture; his interest in the condition of the people, and that, too, at a time when the subject had not become fashionable; these are all to be found in the speeches and writings of Disraeli's first year in politics precisely as they run through his subsequent political life. If we study his first campaigns in the light of what followed, putting aside party prepossessions and ignoring party labels, what they demonstrate is not any tendency to mental fickleness in the man, but an amazing continuity, not to say rigidity, of thought in the principles which underlie his whole political career. We need never look in Disraeli for the self-conscious consistency of the moral precisian; but there is no lack of the far deeper consistency which has its roots' in a highly original mind, in a strong intellectual grasp of certain cardinal ideas, in a temperament of marked idiosyncrasy, and in a character of exceptional persistence.

¹ General Preface to the Novels, 1870.